Having described my invention, what I claim as new and to secure by letters patent is as follows:

1   1.   A method for competitive bidding by vendors of
2   customized goods or services, comprising steps of:
3   receiving a vendor record from at least one of said
4   vendors, said vendor record having a vendor identifier
5   data representing a vendor, and a vendor capability data
6   identifying a capability of said vendor to provide a
7   customized goods or services;
8   receiving a job data from said buyer, said job data
9   having a buyer identifier data representing said buyer,
10   and a job descriptor data representing a custom job for
11   which said buyer wishes a price quote or bid;
12   comparing said vendor records to said job data;
13   identifying at least one of said vendor records as
14   qualified for receiving an invitation for bid, based on
15   said comparison;
16   transmitting a solicitation to said at least one
17   vendor;
18   receiving a bid response data from at least one of
19   said vendors to which said transmitting step transmitted
20   said solicitation, said bid response data identifying
21   the vendor it was received from and a bid price;
22   identifying a candidate bid from said received bid
23   data, based on comparative values of said bid prices;
24   outputting to said buyer a vendor selection data
25   identifying said bid response data and said candidate
26   bid;
27   receiving an approval data from said buyer, said
28   data representing one of an approval of said vendor
29   corresponding to said candidate bid and an approval of
30   another of said vendors; and
31   transmitting an order to the vendor represented by
32   said approval data.

1   2.   A method according to claim 1,
2   wherein said job data further includes a selection
3 criteria data, said selection criteria specifying at
4 least one of a vendor name, a vendor capability, a
5 descriptor of an ownership characteristic of said vendor,
6 a descriptor of a union status of said vendor, and a
7 vendor geographical location, and
8   wherein said comparison is performed in accordance
9 with said selection criteria data.

1   3.   A method according to claim 1 further comprising
2 steps of:
3   ranking said received bid response data according to
4 said represented bid price; and
5   publishing an information data to other vendors
6 identifying said selected vendor and the rank order value
7 of said received bid data.

1   4.   A method according to claim 2 further comprising
2 steps of:
3   ranking said received bid response data according to
4 said represented bid price; and
5   publishing an information data to other vendors
6 identifying said selected vendor and the rank order value
7 of said received bid response data.

1   5.   A method according to claim 3 further comprising
2 steps of:
3   ranking said received bid response data according to
4 said represented bid price; and

5   publishing an information data to other vendors
6   identifying said selected vendor and the rank order value
7   of said received bid response data.

6.   A method according to claim 2, wherein said vendor
capability data represents the identified vendor's
3   capability to manufacture each of a plurality of
4   different types of customized goods.

7.   A method according to claim 1, further comprising
2   steps of:
3   inputting into said central data server a completion
4   of job data;
5   transmitting from said central data server to said
6   buyer an invoice for payment of said bid price;
7   inputting a payment from said buyer into an escrow
8   account serving as a single-source accounts payable
9   destination for the buyer's vendor payments;
10   transferring a payment from said escrow account to
11   an account of said vendor corresponding to the invoice
12   payment data.

1   8.   A method according to claim 7, further comprising
2   steps of:
3   adding the cost to the buyer of using the invention
4   associated with each job as a job transaction fee to the
5   vendor payment invoice prior to buyer approval of the
6   invoice;
7   allocating and distributing a data representing
8   payment of said invoice by transmitting the job
9   transaction fee data to a system administration account
10   and transmitting a remainder vendor payment data to an
11   account of said vendor.

1   9.   A method according to claim 2, further comprising
2   steps of:

51

Doc. 490054

3   inputting into said central data server a completion

4 of job data;

5   transmitting from said central data server to said

6 buyer an invoice for payment of said bid price;

7   inputting a payment from said buyer into an escrow

8 account serving as a single-source accounts payable

9 destination for the buyer's vendor payments;

10   transferring a payment from said escrow account to

11 an account of said vendor corresponding to the invoice

12 payment data.

1 10. A method according to claim 9, further comprising

2 steps of:

3   adding the cost to the buyer of using the invention

4 associated with each job as a job transaction fee to the

5 vendor payment invoice prior to buyer approval of the

6 invoice;

7   allocating and distributing a data representing

8 payment of said invoice by transmitting the job

9 transaction fee data to a system administration account

10 and transmitting a remainder vendor payment data to an

11 account of said vendor.

1 11. A method according to claim 3, further comprising

2 steps of:

3   inputting into said central data server a completion

4 of job data;

5   transmitting from said central data server to said

6 buyer an invoice for payment of said bid price;

7   inputting a payment from said buyer into an escrow

8 account serving as a single-source accounts payable

9 destination for the buyer's vendor payments;

10   transferring a payment from said escrow account to
11 an account of said vendor corresponding to the invoice
12 payment data.

1   12.   A method according to claim 11, further comprising
2 steps of:
3   adding the cost to the buyer of using the invention
4 associated with each job as a job transaction fee to the
5 vendor payment invoice prior to buyer approval of the
6 invoice;
7   allocating and distributing a data representing
8 payment of said invoice by transmitting the job
9 transaction fee data to a system administration account
10 and transmitting a remainder vendor payment data to an
11 account of said vendor.

1   13.   A method according to claim 1, further comprising a
2 step of:
3 calculating a job milestone data based on said buyer's
4 job data.

1   14.   A method according to claim 2, further comprising a
2 step of:
3 calculating a job milestone data based on said buyer's
4 job data.

1   15.   A method according to claim 3, further comprising a
2 step of:
3 calculating a job milestone data based on said buyer's
4 job data.

1   16.   A method according to claim 13 further comprising
2 steps of:
3   generating a job progress verification request based
4 on said job milestone data; and

5   receiving a data representing a job progress

6 corresponding to said job progress verification request.

1 17. A method according to claim 14 further comprising

2 steps of:

3   generating a job progress verification request based

4 on said job milestone data; and

5   receiving a data representing a job progress

6 corresponding to said job progress verification request.

1 18. A method according to claim 15 further comprising

2 steps of:

3   generating a job progress verification request based

4 on said job milestone data; and

5   receiving a data representing a job progress

6 corresponding to said job progress verification request.

1 19. A method according to claim 1 further comprising a

2 step of creating a web site having areas for at least one

3 of a group consisting of said buyer and said vendors to

4 visit, and

5   wherein step of receiving a vendor record comprises

6 a step of said vendor visiting said web site and

7 inputting said record using a web browser.

1 20.   A method according to claim 1,

         wherein said job data includes a preferred vendor

3 data identifying at least one preferred vendor, and

4   wherein said step of transmitting a solicitation

5 includes transmitting said solicitation to said at least

6 one preferred vendor

1 21. A method according to claim 1 wherein said bid

2 response data represents a proposed alternative

3 specification for said custom job represented by said

4 solicitation data and further comprising a step of:

5   displaying said alternative specifications;

6   receiving an alternative specification approval

7   data; and

8   identifying the vendor associated with the bid

9   response data as qualified or not qualified to receive

10 said invitation for bid, based on said alternative

11 specification approval data.

1   22. A system for competitive bidding by vendors of

2 customized goods and services, comprising:

3   A general purpose computer having a data storage;

4   means for inputting a plurality of vendor records

5 into said data storage, each of said vendor records

6 having a vendor identifier data identifying a vendor and

7 a vendor capability data representing a capabilities of

8 said vendor,

9   means for inputting a job data into said data

10 storage, said job data having a buyer identifier data

11 identifying a buyer, a job description data describing a

12 custom job, and a selection criteria data;

13   means for generating a vendor pool data, said vendor

14 pool data representing vendor records qualified to bid on

15 said custom job, each vendor record represented by the

16 vendor pool data being qualified based on a match of at

17 least one of a group consisting of said buyer identifier

18 data, said job description data, and said selection

19 criteria data to at least one of a group consisting of

20 said vendor qualification data and said vendor identifier

21 data;

22   means for transmitting a solicitation to the vendors

23 represented by vendor records in said vendor pool;

24   means for inputting into said general purpose

25 computer a plurality of bid data, each being from a

26 vendor to which said solicitation was transmitted, each

27 of said bid data representing a bid price;

28   means for identifying a bid data from said received
29 bid data having the lowest represented bid price;
30   means for outputting to said buyer a selected vendor
31 data representing the identity of the vendor
32 corresponding to the lowest bid data identified by said
33 identifying means;
34   means for receiving an approval data from said
35 buyer, the approval data indicating an approval of one of
36 said vendor represented by said selected vendor data or
37 another of said vendors
38   means for transmitting an order to the vendor
39 represented by said received approval data.

23.   A system according to claim 22, wherein said means
for receiving a plurality of vendor records includes a
web host, and a web browser associated with at least one
of said buyer and said vendors.

1   24.   A method for competitive bidding by vendors of
2 customized goods or services, comprising steps of:
3   receiving a job data from said buyer, said job data
4 having a buyer identifier data representing said buyer,
5 and a job descriptor data representing a custom job for
6 which said buyer wishes a price quote or bid;
7   distributing to a plurality of vendors, by
8 electronic publishing, a job advertising data
9 representing said custom job;
10   receiving a bid response data from at least one of
11 said plurality of vendors , said bid response data
12 identifying the vendor it was received from , a bid
13 price, and an alternative specification data representing
14 a proposed deviation from said job descriptor data;
15   identifying a selected bid from said received bid
16 response data, based on comparative values of said bid
17 price and said alternative specification data;

18   transmitting an order to the vendor represented by
19 said selected bid;
20   generating a job milestone data based on said job
21 descriptor data; and
22   receiving job progress data from said vendor
23 represented by said selected bid.